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Human Resource Development Review 2011 10: 6 originally published online 29 December 2010
DOI: 10.1177/1534484310384958

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://hrd.sagepub.com/content/10/1/6
Constructs of the Work/Life Interface: A Synthesis of the Literature and Introduction of the Concept of Work/Life Harmony

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to identify construct definitions and measurement tools for the work/life interface concepts: conflict, enrichment, and balance. An understanding of these concepts is critical to HRD professionals because interventions designed to counter work/life interface issues cannot be strategically created, and culture changes cannot be effectively addressed until the discipline understands the nature and the organizational implications of employees’ work/life interface. A new construct called work/life harmony and the work/life harmony model are introduced to aid in the understanding of the work/life interface.

Keywords

work/life issues, management, research

The attainment of work/life (family) balance continues to be the mythical quality standard not only for individuals in the workforce but also for the organizations that employ them. Work/life issues impact everyone, regardless of their education level, gender, income level, family structure, occupation, race, age, job status, or religion. A major deterrent to employee job performance is stress associated with juggling work and personal life. Recent work done by Lockwood (2003) found that more than 70% of employees report

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not having a healthy balance between their work and personal lives. Additional research has indicated that 90% of working adults believe they do not spend enough time with their families, which is also the number-one rated work/life priority of more than 80% of men and women (Lockwood, 2003). An August 2008 report by McKinsey stated that Generation Y employees are seeking greater work/life balance, which compounds the task of recruiting sufficient talent (McKinsey Quarterly Chart Focus Newsletter, 2008).

Regarding organizations, in the 2007 Society for Human Resource Management’s (SHRM) Job Satisfaction Survey Report, “flexibility to balance life and work issues” ranks as “very important” for 52% of total respondents and 48% of HR professionals (Frincke, 2007, p. 27). For individual workers, work/life balance ranked fourth in importance, behind compensation, benefits, and job security, each of which can be argued as a contributor to achieving work/life balance. Despite ranking as “important” or “very important” in each satisfaction survey since 2002, SHRM reports that the responsiveness of organizations to these issues has only increased slightly from 2006 (Frincke, 2007). This sampling of research findings only reflects the “tip of the iceberg” in regard to the depth and breadth of work/life issues facing employees and organizations.

As is obvious in the aforementioned individual and organizational research, work/life balance receives considerable attention and is frequently referenced in our everyday language by a wide variety of audiences. Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet (2006) have called the “work/life balance” phrase an “almost taken for granted metaphor” (p. 9). Despite its multiple references to human resource management, and its predominance in HR literature, work/life balance is as much an HR issue as it is an HRM issue (Morris & Madsen, 2007). Traditionally, work/life issues have fallen under the purview of HRM because the benefits designed to address them (e.g., leave programs and flexible schedules) have been considered perks that are a “necessary evil” of doing business. Friedman, Christensen, and DeGroot (2000) suggest that these programs rarely help the majority of employees achieve sustainable balance because they do not permeate the organization’s culture. Swanson and Holton (2001) contend that one of the functions of HRD, organizational development, involves changing the organization’s processes to improve performance. Therefore, both HRM and HRD can focus individual and organizational learning and change that supports its employees’ need for work/life balance, which research has shown can ultimately contribute to the organization’s competitive advantage and overall performance (e.g., Arthur & Cook, 2003, 2004; Cascio, 2006; Christensen, 1997; Halpern & Murphy, 2005; Kane, 1999, Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Pfeffer, 1994). Marques (2006) further contends that this level of integration “translates into enhanced attunement between workers’ and organizations’ needs and workers’ work–life balance” (p. 117).

In her 2003 HRDI manuscript, Janet Polach issued a call to action for HRD professionals to “move the issue [of work/life balance] beyond programs to instill a way of thinking throughout corporations on the need for balancing work and life successfully and equitably” (p. 58). To address Polach’s call to action, HRD professionals must first develop a conceptual understanding of conflict, enrichment, and balance. Based on that conceptual understanding, HRD professionals will be better equipped to develop...
interventions that address the various aspects of work and life that create conflict, enrichment, and balance opportunities for employees.

Therefore, the purpose of this conceptual literature review is to thoroughly examine the literature streams relevant to the constructs of conflict, enrichment, and balance as well as measurement tools used to assess them. In addition, we present the new concept of work/life harmony, which goes beyond current definitions of balance and provides a specific target for HRD research and practice. The examination of specific interventions, including their development and effectiveness, is beyond the scope of this review (for a discussion of individual, family, and organizational influences, outcomes, and interventions associated with the work/life interface, see Morris, 2008). Our ultimate goal is to further the conceptualization of the work/life interface for HRD researchers and practitioners.

Defining Conflict, Enrichment, and Balance

Before defining the conflict, enrichment, and balance constructs, it is important to note these constructs share three similarities that expand and shape our understanding of the work/life interface. First, the constructs of conflict, enrichment, and balance illustrate that “cross-domain effects” exist in the relationship between work and life (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Cross-domain effects are defined as those experiences and decisions that occur in one domain and are capable of influencing outcomes in the other domain. This approach assumes a bidirectional influence of mutual and reciprocal effects of the work and life domains. Second, the bidirectional influence of the cross-domain effects are charged with a positive or negative valence, creating the potential for four reciprocal influences between the domains of work and life (i.e., work positive/life positive; work positive/life negative; work negative/life positive; work negative/life negative; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Third, these three constructs indicate that the interface between work and life is a dynamic and complex interface that includes cognitive, affective, social and behavioral dimensions (Morris, 2008).

Work/Life Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), influenced by the work of Kahn et al. (1964), are credited with creating the seminal definition (MacDermid & Harvey, 2006) of work–life conflict: “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). By virtue of 21 years of additional research, Greenhaus, Allen, and Spector (2006), influenced by the work of Edwards and Rothbard (2000), expanded the definition to include conflict that occurs when one role interferes with an individual’s effectiveness in the other role. “Therefore, the essence of work–family conflict is interrole interference, and work–family conflict could just as easily be referred to as work–family interference” (Greenhaus et al., 2006, p. 64). Conflict is considered a bidirectional construct in that work can interfere with family and family can interfere with work (Frone, 2003; Hammer & Thompson, 2003).
Three types of conflict have been identified in literature: time-based, strain-based, and behavioral-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time-based conflict is considered the most prevalent type of conflict (Hammer & Thompson, 2003). It occurs in one of two ways: (a) the amount of time spent in one role takes away from the amount of time available for the other role, and (b) preoccupation with one role impairs the ability to function in the other role, despite the individual’s physical presence (aka presenteeism; Bartolome & Evans, 1980). Time conflict combines the schedule conflict and excessive work time concepts identified by Pleck, Staines, and Lang (1980) with role overload, originally identified by Kahn et al. (1964). Time-based conflict also reflects scarcity theory, in that the total amount of time and/or energy available to an individual is fixed and participation in multiple roles decreases the total amount of time and/or energy available to meet all demands, thereby creating conflict (Marks, 1977) and strain on the individual (Goode, 1960).

Work-related time conflict is generally based on the number of hours that an individual works per week (Burke, Weir, & Duwors, 1980; Keith & Schafer, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980). These hours include not only time physically spent on the job but also time spent in commuting and work-travel (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). Pleck et al. (1980) contend that overtime and shiftwork also contribute to work-related time conflict. Family-related time conflict involves the amount of time spent with family or dealing with family members detracting from time that could be spent at work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Research has found that, generally speaking, married females experience more family-related time conflict than single females and mothers experience more conflict than nonmothers (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Herman & Gyllstrom, 1977). Of course, since every individual is different, this scenario will not hold true for everyone (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979; Pleck et al., 1980). Two primary theories apply to how individuals deal with time conflict. First, Lambert’s (1990) accommodation theory suggests that individuals can accommodate time demands in one role by decreasing the amount of time in the other role. Second, segmentation theory suggests that individuals intentionally compartmentalize their roles to prevent presenteeism (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003; Lambert, 1990).

Strain-based conflict occurs when the strain (or stressors) felt in one role make it difficult to perform in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Again building on the work of Pleck et al. (1980), strain-based conflict is based in the idea of fatigue and irritability created from one role affecting the activities in the other role. Strain-based conflict also reflects person–environment (P-E) fit theory, developed by Kahn et al. (1964). P-E fit is based on conflicting role demands, where fit is defined as the match between an individual’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and the role he or she is asked to perform. When KSAs do not match the expectations of the role (whether work or personal), a lack of fit develops, ultimately leading to stress (both positive and negative; Nelson & Simmons, 2003). Work-related strain conflict has been positively related to job ambiguity and negatively related to leader support and facilitation (Jones & Butler, 1980; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). Work-related strain has also been related to stressful events at work or job burnout that result in fatigue or depression in the family role (Bartolome & Evans, 1980; Jackson & Maslach, 1982). Family-based
strain conflict primarily occurs when spousal career and family expectations are not in congruence (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Chadwick, Albrecht, & Kunz, 1976; Eiswirth-Neems & Handal, 1978).

Behavioral-based conflict occurs when the behaviors required in one role are incompatible with the behaviors required in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985): “behaviors that are expected or appropriate in the family role (e.g., expressiveness, emotional sensitivity) are viewed as inappropriate or dysfunctional when used in the work role” (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997, p. 4). As previously noted, this is bidirectional in nature in that aggressive behaviors that may be required at work are considered inappropriate at home (Hammer & Thompson, 2003).

Measures of conflict. As the conflict construct has been a mainstay for researchers for more than 30 years and is subsequently operationally developed, a litany of scales measuring conflict has been proposed in the literature (e.g., Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988; Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Burke, 1988; Burke et al., 1979; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kopelman et al., 1983; MacDermid et al., 2000; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, Rabinowitz, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1989). Matthews, Kath, and Barnes-Farrell (2010) note that the majority of the measures in existence recognize the bidirectionality of work/life conflict but lack capturing the multidimensionality of the work/life conflict construct (i.e., time-, behavior-, and strain-based conflict). In addition, as discussed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996), some of these scales have significant variability in psychometric properties whereas others are so lengthy to be burdensome to the respondent. In a review of the literature, only the Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) scale taps bidirectionality in all three components of conflict: time, strain, and behavior. Its development included five independent samples and six different subscales to tap bidirectionality in the three areas of conflict (i.e., time, behavior, and strain). The final 18-item scale reported a CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, and α ranging from .78 to .87 for the six subscales. Matthews et al. (2010) consider the Carlson et al. scale “to be one of the most theoretically and psychometrically sound measures of work–family conflict available to researchers today” (p. 76).

Work/Life Enrichment

The concept of enrichment is receiving considerable attention by work/life scholars because it has the potential to describe the more positive qualities, connections, and benefits gained from the work and life interface. However, because this in an emerging area of research, although the initial findings seem promising, no consistent conclusions can be drawn at this time. Furthermore, preliminary research suggests that the processes and outcomes that are associated with work/family conflict are not necessarily the same processes and outcomes that relate to concepts like work/family enrichment (Morris, 2008).

Researchers disagree as to what comprises the positive side of the work/life interface. Frone (2003) suggests that enrichment, integration, enhancement, and facilitation are simply synonyms for the positive side of the work–life interface. Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, and Grzywacz (2006) argue, however, that each of Frone’s “synonyms” are actually
distinct constructs describing different aspects of positive work–life interface. As seen in the following reviews, the “constructs” are more alike than they are different in both their definition and theoretical bases.

**Enrichment.** Greenhaus and Powell (2006) define enrichment as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (p. 73). Enrichment occurs through one of two “paths”; the instrumental path, where resource gains in one role directly increase performance in the other role, and the affect path, where gains in one role indirectly increase performance in the other role due to overall improvements in the individual’s positive affect (Carlson et al., 2006). Enrichment is composed of four “types” of gains: (a) developmental (i.e., the acquisition of knowledge, skills, perspectives, or values); (b) affective (i.e., changes in behavior and/or attitudes); (c) capital (i.e., acquisition of assets); and (d) efficiency (i.e., development of an increased focus level; Carlson et al., 2006). As with enhancement and facilitation, enrichment is grounded in the role accumulation expansionist theories of Sieber (1974), Marks (1977), Barnett and Baruch (1985), and Voydanoff (2001). In direct opposition to Carlson et al.’s (2006) view of distinct constructs, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) support the idea that enrichment is synonymous with enhancement, facilitation, and integration.

**Integration.** Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) propose that integration occurs “when attitudes in one role positively spill over into another role, or when experiences in one role serve as resources that enrich another role in one’s life” (p. 407). Kossek and Lambert (2005) contend that integration is grounded in spillover theory, in that individuals carry attitudes and beliefs from one role to the other. Integration is the polar opposite of segmentation theory (i.e., the intentional separation of the work and family spheres) popular in “old-school” corporate America (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). In addition, integration is supported by P-E Fit theory, which suggests as the work-place level of role integration increases to the point that is consistent with an individual’s personal preference, individuals are more likely to negotiate work and family roles to his or her satisfaction (Kreiner, 2006). Fletcher and Bailyn (2005) purport relaxing the spheres of work and family to allow individuals to be involved in both with the expectation that the overall quality of each sphere will be improved. Finally, integration is considered the middle-ground between segmentation (i.e., complete separation of roles) and enmeshment (i.e., complete overlapping of roles; Chesley, Moen, & Shore, 2001; Minuchin, 1974).

**Enhancement.** Graves, Ohlott, and Ruderman (2007) define enhancement as facilitation that occurs when one role increases energy and attitude, and contributes to the development of skills in the other role. Thoits (1987) suggests that an individual’s participation in multiple roles may enhance one’s energy reserve by increased sources of self-esteem, social identity, resources, and rewards available, thereby allowing a greater ability to cope with multiple demands. This role accumulation expansionist perspective is in direct conflict with the scarcity hypothesis that underlies conflict (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). This is due to the contention that resources are not only augmented by multiple role participation but also transferred between roles as needed (Graves et al., 2007). Wadsworth and Owens (2007) suggest that because enhancement and conflict are distinct constructs, it is possible to experience high levels of each simultaneously.
Facilitation. Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, and Kacmar (2007) define facilitation as “the extent to which an individual’s engagement in one life domain (i.e., work/life) provides gains (i.e., developmental, affective, capital, or efficiency) which contribute to enhanced functioning of another life domain (i.e., family/work)” (p. 64). Similar to enhancement, facilitation is rooted in role accumulation expansionist theory (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). In addition to expansionist theory, Wayne et al. (2007) contend positive organizational scholarship (POS; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) contributes to facilitation because it underscores the positive potential of work–life interface by focusing on the “good” in humanity. In addition, the ecological systems theory (EST; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000a; Voydanoff, 2001) contributes to the understanding of facilitation in its assumption that people desire and have the ability to grow and develop.

Wayne et al. (2007) identify three contributors to facilitation: engagement, gains (as proposed by Carlson et al., 2006, in their development of the enrichment construct), and enhanced functioning. They define engagement as the level of intensity an individual applies to role-related activities. Active engagement leads to the development of privileges and benefits that can be carried into the other domain (Sieber, 1974). As discussed in the enrichment section, four types of gains exist: (a) developmental, (b) affective, (c) capital, and (d) efficiency (Carlson et al., 2006). The acquisition of gains can be transferred between roles, thereby providing positive benefits to both roles (Wayne et al., 2007). Finally, enhanced functioning relates to improvements in basic life functions, such as communication and problem-solving skills (Wayne et al., 2007).

Measures of enrichment. Due to relatively new focus on enrichment by researchers, measures that have been used are few and generally lack sound psychometric indicators (with the exception of Carlson et al. [2006] study; Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006). In addition, as the positive side of the work/life interface is known by a variety of constructs (e.g., facilitation, enrichment, enhancement), developed scales also reflect these varying constructs (e.g., Cohen & Kirchmeyer, 1995; Grzywacz, 2000; Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000a, 2000b; Kirchmeyer, 1992, 1993, 1995; Stephens, Franks, & Atienza, 1997; Sumer & Knight, 2001; Tiedje et al., 1990; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). In reviewing the literature, only one scale corresponds to Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) conceptualization of work/life enrichment (i.e., a bidirectional construct with four distinct dimensions—developmental, affect, capital, and efficiency gains). Developed by Carlson et al. (2006), the multidimensional Work/Life Enrichment scale included five independent samples and six different subscales to tap bidirectionality in the four areas of enrichment gains (i.e., developmental, affect, efficiency, and capital). The final 18-item scale reported a CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, and α ranging from .73 to .92 for the six subscales.

Work/Life Balance

Although the phrase “work/life balance” receives considerable attention and is frequently referenced in our everyday language by a wide variety of audiences, finding a commonly
accepted definition of the phrase within the work/life literature is difficult (Frone, 2003). Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet (2006) have called the phrase an “almost taken for granted metaphor” (p. 9). As a result, work/life (family) balance has been given multiple, and at times, inconsistent definitions throughout research.

Traditional efforts to define the work/life balance concept viewed it as the “absence of conflict” between the work and life domains. For example, rather than focusing on engagement and equality, Frone (2003) contends that balance occurs when there is a “lack of conflict or interference between the work and family roles” (p. 145). Frone’s definition helps move away from the “zero-sum gain” concept by focusing on the idea that balance can occur without spending exactly the same amount of time in both roles. He proposes a taxonomy of balance based on the type of interaction (conflict vs. enrichment) and direction of influence (W-F vs. F-W). Frone contends that balance occurs when an individual experiences low levels of interrole conflict in combination with high levels of interrole enrichment. It is interesting to note that Frone’s definition uses the constructs of conflict and enrichment to define balance. This reflects the circular nature of work/life research that is seen in the literature.

In contrast to the traditional school of thought in defining work/life balance, newer schools of thought have emerged and are beginning to examine the work/life balance concept in other ways that are useful to our development of theory, research, and practice. As representative examples of this new school of thought, we present and discuss two definitions of work/life balance:

The extent to which individuals are equally engaged in and equally satisfied with work and family roles. (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003, p. 513)

The accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between and individual and his or her role-related partners in work and family domains. (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 458)

In 2003, Greenhaus et al. published a well-regarded and highly cited manuscript on work/life balance. They proposed a definition of balance that attempted to combine the different foci of prominent researchers in the field: equality (Clark, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Mead, 1964) and engagement (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). To this end, they defined balance as “the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in—and equally satisfied with—his or her work and family role” (Greenhaus et al., 2003, p. 513). They further contend that this definition follows the work of Marks and MacDermid in that it provides a broad enough definition to include both positive and negative balance. To this end, balance becomes a continuum with imbalance (in either role) anchoring one end and balance (again in either role) anchoring the other end. Furthermore, Greenhaus et al. propose three components of balance: (a) time balance (i.e., time is divided equally between roles); (b) involvement balance (i.e., the individual has equal psychological involvement in both roles); and (c) satisfaction balance (i.e., equal satisfaction is gained from both roles).
In an ADHR special issue, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) define work/life balance as “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (p. 458). This definition expands Voydanoff’s (2005) definition that balance serves as “a global assessment that work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains” (p. 825). Grzywacz and Carlson contend this definition is superior to its predecessors because it extends on Marks and MacDermid’s (1996) role-balance theory that contends it is possible to be fully engaged in both roles without sacrificing one for the other. In addition, by focusing on activities rather than satisfaction, Grzywacz and Carlson’s definition views balance “as a social rather than a psychological construct and it takes on meaning outside the individual. Giving work–family balance meaning outside the individual has significant implications for validating measures and for designing studies to test and refine theories of work–family balance” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 458).

These work/life balance definitions make us more keenly aware of, and sensitive to, the plethora of personalized/individualized meanings associated with the phrase “work/life balance.” About work/life balance, Fleetwood (2007) noted,

"It is unclear whether WLB refers to an objective state of affairs, a subjective experience, perception or feeling; an actuality or an aspiration; a discourse or a practice; a metaphor for flexible working; a metaphor for the gendered division of labor; or a metaphor for some other political agenda. (p. 352)

Clearly, the phrase work/life balance means a lot of different things to different people.

**Measures of balance.** Measuring balance has been difficult due to a lack of consistency in construct definitions and therefore an inability to develop a consistent operational definition. Historically, these balance measurements have been based on an individual’s self-reported assessment of balance and have therefore been limited in their interpretability (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001) treated balance as a dependent variable measured using a composite score of five items measuring an individual’s ability to balance his or her work and family demands. Hill et al. (2001) reported an internal consistency on this scale of $\alpha = .83$. Greenhaus et al. (2003) shifted balance measurement from a subjective-style measurement to one grounded in measuring the equality of time, involvement, and satisfaction an individual felt in his or her work and family roles. Their measurement style supported the continuum theory, by following Deephouse’s (1996) calculation to create a $-1$ to $+1$ scale where zero represented an equal amount of time, involvement, or satisfaction in both roles. Imbalance occurs on either side of zero, with positive scores indicating work-leaning imbalance and negative scores indicating a family-leaning imbalance. The authors did not provide samples of their measures but did report the following alphas: involvement, $\alpha = .86$; career satisfaction, $\alpha = .86$; and family satisfaction, $\alpha = .78$. An alpha score was not provided for the time balance measurement. Finally, in an English study, Dex and Bond
(2005), using a 7- and 10-item checklist (seven items for single individuals and the same seven plus three items for individuals with families) for individuals to calculate their level of balance. Alphas for the full family scale were considerably greater than those for the individual scale ($\alpha = .80$ vs. $\alpha = .66$, respectively). This scale is particularly unique because it provides rich data for researchers and immediate feedback for participants.

### A New Conceptualization of Work and Life: Harmony

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) contend that “with a solid conceptualization in place, HRD professionals have a foundation upon which to begin creating strategies that contribute to organizational goals by helping workers achieve work–family balance” (p. 467). Building on Grzywacz and Carlson’s call for a “solid conceptualization” in defining work/life balance and Frone’s (2003) taxonomy, we propose a model for work/life harmony that integrates the concepts of conflict and enrichment. Hill et al. (2007) note “when life is seen as a balancing act, work and home are seen as irreconcilable nemeses” (p. 522). In agreement with Hill et al., and drawing on the traditional definition (Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, n.d.) of harmony, we propose the idea of work/life harmony:

**Work/life harmony:** An individually pleasing, congruent arrangement of work and life roles that is interwoven into a single narrative of life (Morris & McMillan personal conversation, May 20, 2010).

This concept is not completely new in the literature. Hill et al. (2007) suggest (without providing a definition of the construct) that HRD professionals who use the musical metaphor of harmony to create initiatives may achieve greater success than those who frame interventions in the hopes of achieving balance. Furthermore, in his reconceptualization of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs for employee commitment, Stum (2001) suggests that *work/life harmony*, defined as “the drive to achieve a sense of fulfillment in balancing work and life responsibilities” (p. 7), replaces self-fulfillment as the pinnacle pyramid. Finally, the Illinois Cooperative Extension created a program titled “Intentional harmony: Managing work and life” to address a perceived gap in training (Wiley, 2003; Wiley, Branscomb, & Wang, 2007).

As shown in Figure 1, harmony occurs when the resources gained through work/life enrichment (i.e., development, affect, efficiency, and capital gains; Carlson et al., 2006; Wayne et al., 2007) are successfully aligned with, and serve to, ameliorate, or alleviate the stressors (i.e., time, behavior, and strain; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) arising from work/life conflict. The purpose of this model is twofold. First, it goes beyond work/life balance by integrating the concepts of work/life conflict and work/life enrichment into harmony. It is our contention that harmony cannot exist in a vacuum. It is negatively affected by role inequities (e.g., Frone, 2003; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007), which we argue result from *work/life conflict*, which is defined as “a form of interrole conflict” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Furthermore, it involves the negotiation and sharing of role responsibilities (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007), which
result from behavioral and process resources (i.e., development, affect, efficiency, and capital gains; Carlson et al., 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Second, by focusing on the gains provided in the enrichment side of the model, HRD researchers and practitioners have the opportunity to propose direct interventions to maximize the gains resulting from instances of work/life enrichment (Morris, Storberg-Walker, & McMillan, 2009).

Two distinct characteristics of harmony exist. First, work/life harmony can be applied to individuals or organizations. At the individual level, an individual’s overall harmony can be assessed by examining their levels of experienced conflict and enrichment gains (which can be achieved through HRD-initiated interventions). At the organizational level, practitioners can “spot-check” the health of specific departments, or the organization as a whole, to determine if additional interventions are necessary to increase developmental or efficiency resources. Increasing these resources reduces the impact of conflict, ultimately increasing perceptions of harmony. This can be particularly effective in times of organizational change or uncertainty. Second, as noted by Frone (2003), the concept of integrating work and life is not a zero-sum gain. In our model, as individuals (or departments/organizations) increase their resources, a surplus of gains can develop, which result in increasingly positive perceptions of work/life harmony, and ultimately organizational performance (see Frincke, 2007).
**Recommendations HRD Research and Practice**

We now transition to recommendations for HRD research and practice. More needs to be done by both HRD researchers and practitioners to further the work/life agenda; to this end, we provide the following specific recommendations for research and practice.

**Research Recommendations**

The greatest strength in the current research is the zeal of researchers in attempting to create a single-construct definition and measures to evaluate it (e.g., Dex & Bond, 2005; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus et al., 2003). The concept of harmony is a salient topic in corporate America, which lends practical credibility to research initiatives. We believe that harmony needs to be measured using both subjective and objective measures in the same survey. Greenhaus et al. (2003) contend that combining these scales will provide better understanding into how and why individuals consider their lives in harmony. If we can elucidate the *hows* and *whys* of harmony, then HRD interventions can be developed to address the issues. The first step in this process is to develop a psychometrically sound measure for individuals, then build on that to examine the affects of individual harmony issues on spouses/partners, children, and the organization as a whole. For example, how do spouses, partners, and children perceive harmony and do those perceptions correlate with the employees’ perceptions? Also, how does individual harmony affect the work-group in the organization? Third, what are the effects of harmony on organization performance—specifically bottom-line financial outcomes? Fourth, how do these work/life concepts influence learning, performance, and change initiatives? Finally, the work/life harmony model provides a basis for developing new measures of harmony that integrate conflict and enrichment. Madsen (2003) suggests that “work and conflict measurement in the workplace should go beyond overall WFC” (p. 56). Development of a new measure of harmony based on conflict and enrichment addresses this suggestion.

**Practice Recommendations**

Although specific interventions are beyond the scope of this literature review (see Morris, 2008), we contend HRD interventions to address work/life interface issues cannot be created, and culture changes cannot be facilitated, until the organization understands the nature and the organizational implications of employees’ work/life interface. This level of understanding can be obtained and/or fortified through the use of organization feedback systems, culture surveys, performance appraisal and communication systems, and the use of metrics to quantify utilization of existing policies and programs. In addition, professionals need to understand the implications of the work/life interface on other HRD interventions (i.e., those whose purpose does not specifically include work/life issues). Furthermore, Morris and Madsen (2007) note that

by better understanding work—life theory, issues, challenges, and possible solutions, HRD professionals can strategically change the work culture, redesign work,
implement training programs, and tailor career programs or assistance strategies enabling employees to be more engaged, productive, and fulfilled. (p. 440)

The work/life harmony model creates a framework that allows HRD researchers and practitioners to create interventions that can ultimately increase performance and productivity. Work/life interventions are policies, programs, practices, and benefits that are intentionally designed to promote healthy balance in the interface between the domains of work and life, while also alleviating or ameliorating the bidirectional stressful conflicts and tensions between the work and life domains (Hill et al., 2007; Lobel & Kossek, 1996; Morris & Madsen, 2007). Accordingly, as an OD intervention, work/life interventions enable individuals to positively experience greater and more optimal work/life situations (e.g., enrichment vs. conflict), enabling them to unleash levels of human expertise for maximized levels of performance (Morris et al., 2009).

**Conclusion**

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) contend that “with a solid conceptualization in place, HRD professionals have a foundation upon which to begin creating strategies that contribute to organizational goals by helping workers achieve work–family balance” (p. 467). We extend this contention by suggesting that to obtain this grounding framework, HRD professionals must move beyond the idea of balancing roles to harmony, where roles are integrated in a manner that is pleasing to, and in line with, an employee’s values. This requires HRD to possess not only a theoretical understanding of conflict, enrichment, and harmony but also an understanding of the measurement tools to assess them. We believe that the work/life harmony model will assist HRD researchers and practitioners in developing their theoretical understanding of this important topic. Only then can HRD professionals propose interventions to promote organizational and individual development, change initiatives, and performance improvement. Our hope is that HRD researchers will contribute to further conceptual and measurement development by conducting research, documenting progress, measuring accomplishment, securing management support, and tracking the efficiency and effectiveness of work/life interventions.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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